

INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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COUNTRY	USSR (Kazakh SSR)	REPORT	25X1
SUBJECT	1. Uprisings in Forced Labor Camps in Kengir and Rudnik 2. Improvements Following the Uprisings	DATE DISTR.	21 October 1955
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This is UNEVALUATED Information

SOURCE EVALUATIONS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

1. The central administration for the Kazakhstan forced labor camps, located at Kengir (N48, E 67), has jurisdiction over seven camps distributed over an area 600 to 700 kilometers in circumference lying between the Aral Sea and Lake Baykal. Each camp is divided into approximately three subsidiary camps. 25X1
2. From May to June 1954, strikes and uprisings occurred in the Kengir and nearby Rudnik labor camps. In Kengir, a 41-day strike from 10 May to 20 June resulted in the death of about 600 prisoners, when troops armed with machine guns and supported by seven T-34-type tanks forced their way into the camp. The Rudnik camp, informed by free settlers of the progress of the strike at Kengir, initiated a sympathetic strike on 15 June, which ended without bloodshed on 22 June when seven tanks appeared before the camp gates.
3. The leader of the strike at Kengir was a prisoner, Colonel Kuznikov (fnu), who until about 1950 was attached to the Soviet Konsulatura in Berlin. Kuznikov defended himself so ably at his trial in Karaganda (N 49-50, E 73-10) following the strikes that the court declined to sentence him, and his case was remanded to Moscow.
4. After the strikes, the camps were visited by commissions which usually included a representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and a representative of the Central Committee of the Party. Camp officials were absent from the interviews with prisoners, and the latter did not spare their criticism. Complaints were acted upon in so far as was feasible.
5. The behavior of guards toward the prisoners improved after the uprising, and unpopular guards were withdrawn under threat of further strikes. In fall 1954, essential changes were made in the administration of the camps and the treatment of prisoners. The internal administration of the camps was transferred as widely as possible to the prisoners themselves. Regular political training which emphasized the theme that the prisoners were all members of the "great Soviet family" was initiated in the camps. The free settlers were reminded, on the other hand, that the political prisoners were not criminals, as they had been regarded previously.

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(Note: Washington distribution indicated by "X"; Field distribution by "#")

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-2-

6. The wearing of civilian clothing had already been permitted in the summer of 1954. In October, the following improvements were made in camp conditions:
- a. Shaving of heads of prisoners was no longer mandatory.
 - b. All political prisoners were permitted to write one letter monthly to an address inside the USSR. Until that time, the maximum had been two letters per year. A special ruling was promised on letters abroad.
 - c. Visits of relatives were allowed.
 - d. At least half of the inmates received passes to leave the camp and visit the town. Foreign prisoners were somewhat restricted in this respect, because the authorities evidently did not want them to mingle with the local population.
 - e. Four-week vacations were granted all prisoners, regardless of nationality, and one of the better barracks was designated as vacation quarters, where prisoners could receive better than average food.
 - f. The guards and officers were ordered to treat the prisoners courteously.
7. Three amnesties were announced in 1954:
- a. An amnesty for persons whose offense occurred before their eighteenth birthday.
 - b. An amnesty for invalids and older persons.
 - c. An amnesty for all prisoners who had served two-thirds of their sentences. Amnesty was not automatic but was ruled on by a local court consisting of three lay judges and a representative of the public prosecutor's office. The final decision was made by the camp directors. Serious offenders were not amnestied.

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